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**Challenging the Criminal Code on the Origins of Human Life**

Conservative MP, Stephen Woodworth is challenging a 400 year-old law in the Criminal Code that attempts to define when human life begins. In a press release issued just before Christmas, he called on the Canadian Government to re-visit this law, and re-open the debate on abortion. "Canadian law provides no human rights protection whatsoever for children before the moment of complete birth."

In the Canadian Criminal Code, Section 223 states that "a child becomes a human being within the meaning of this Act when it has completely proceeded, in a living state, from the body of its mother." As Woodworth notes, "a child is legally considered to be sub-human while his or her little toe remains in the birth canal, even if he or she is breathing," he said.

"This sets up a medically and scientifically untenable position," says Natalie Hudson Sonnen, Executive Director of LifeCanada, "and sets Canada apart from almost every other nation on the planet, with regard to the lack of protection for unborn human beings."

"What is most unsettling about Section 223, is that despite it's archaic language, it is still being applied by the courts," says Hudson Sonnen. Part 2 of Section 223 is particularly convoluted, stating that a person commits homicide when injury is caused to a "child before or during its birth as a result of which the child dies after becoming a human being."

The courts have applied this law, most recently with the case of an Ottawa woman who tried to shoot her full-term baby through her own uterus with a BB gun. Despite the bullet being lodged in her son's brain, he survived, but the courts acquitted her because the injuries were inflicted while he was inside the womb and according to the Section, not a human being. Had he died after being born, and in terms of this law, "after becoming a human being," she would have been charged with homicide.

"How can laws that clearly do not measure up to accepted medical and scientific practice continue to act as a point of reference for such important issues?" asks Hudson Sonnen. "We need to examine whether this law reflects our understanding of human rights, which means that our nation must address the abortion issue."

LifeCanada supports the efforts of Conservative MP, Stephen Woodworth, to challenge the Canadian Criminal Code language of Section 223 and thus re-open the question of the status of the unborn in Canada.

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*LifeCanada/VieCanada* is a national, not-for-profit organization working to ensure respect and dignity for all Canadians.